

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 02730

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PN PQ ELAB PFOR

SUBJ: TORRIJOS TO MEET WITH PANAMANIAN LABOR OF CANAL ZONE AND
CIVIC LEADERS

1. GENERAL TORRIJOS, GOP CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT, HAS REQUESTED DEAN BUTCHER, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE AIFLD-SUPPORTED CONFEDERACION DE TRABAJADORES DE LA REPUBLIC DE PANAMA (CTRP), TO ARRANGE FOR SMALL GROUP OF CANAL ZONE LABOR LEADERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LATIN AMERICAN CIVIC COUNCILS TO MEET WITH HIM MAY 14. TORRIJOS' PURPOSE IS APPARENTLY TO REASSURE THEM OF GOP INTENTIONS AND TO HEAR THEIR THOUGHTS REGARDING THE CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. TWO REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH OF THEE THREE PREDOMINATELY PANAMANIAN-CITIZEN LABOR UNIONS OPERATING IN THE ZONE, THE NATIONAL MARITIME UNION AND LOCALS 900 AND 907 OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES (AFSCME), ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND TOGETHER WITH SEVERAL LEADERS OF THE ELECTED CIVIC COUNCILS. BUTCHER HAS GIVEN THIS INFORMATION TO EMBOFF IN CONFIDENCE.

2. TORRIJOS AUTHORIZED BUTCHER EARLIER THIS YEAR (INDRECTLY THROUGH THE HEAD OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM, DR. JUAN ABADIA) TO ANNOUNCE PUBLICLY
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WHENEVER BUTCHER THOUGHT TIMELY THAT THE GOP WOULD
GUARANTEE THAT PANAMANIAN WORKERS IN THE ZONE WOULD NOT

SUFFER BY THE COMING CHANGE IN JURISDICTION. UNTIL NOW AT
LEAST BUTCHER HAS HESITATED TO DO THIS FOR FEAR THAT BOTH HE
AND THE CTRP WOULD BE HURT IF THE WORKERS LATER CAME TO
BELIEVE THAT THE PROMISE WAS NOT KEPT.

3. THE RECENT TESTIMONY BY BOTH U.S.-CITIZEN AND
PANAMANIAN-CITIZEN LABOR AND CIVIC GROUPS BEFORE THE
METCALFE SUB-COMMITTEE HERE AND IN WASHINGTON IN WHICH
WILD CHARGES AND RUMORS WERE REPEATED HAS INCREASED CONCERN
AMONG ALL SEGMENTS OF THE ZONE WORK FORCE AS TO THEIR
FUTURE. TORRIJOS APPARENTLY HAS DECIDED THAT THE TIME
HAS COME TO BRING PANAMANIAN CIVIC AND LABOR LEADERS IN
THE ZONE INTO THE PICTURE BOTH TO REASSURE THEM OF THEIR
FUTURE AND TO PERHAPS SEE HOW THEY CAN BE USEFUL IN
OBTAINING THE GOP'S GOALS. TORRIJOS HAD PRIVATELY DESIGNATED
BUTCHER TO BE HIS CONTACT WITH CANAL ZONE LABOR IN LATE
1974 BUT UNTIL NOW HAD NOT MADE USE OF HIS SERVICES.
JORDEN

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